

SWEDISH
MANUAL TREATMENT
BY
JOHN SODERBERG

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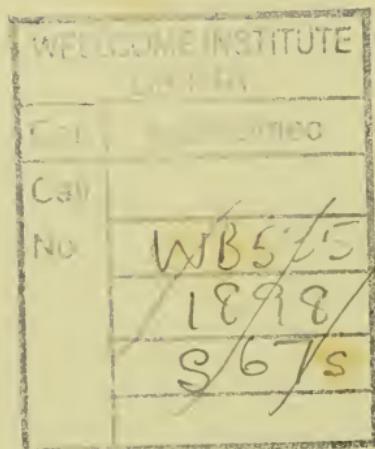
A Short Explanatory Treatise.

BY
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PREFACE.

No claim is made for this little pamphlet as a scientific treatise. It is written in response to frequent requests for an explanation in simple language of the principles and action of, and the beneficial results to be derived from, the 'Swedish Manual Treatment.'

JOHN SODERBERG.

139, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.

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THE SWEDISH MANUAL TREATMENT

‘MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO.’

It was in the beginning of this century that Per Henrik Ling, who is well known as the ‘Father of Swedish Gymnastics,’ discovered the good effect of certain gymnastic movements in cases of illness.

He studied the subject deeply, and made it one of world-wide reputation.

After his death his pupils carried on his work, in spite of much opposition from the Medical Faculty in Sweden, where, however, it is now recognised as a most useful therapeutic agent, and is extensively practised by a number of young medical men.

In England, where it was first introduced

about fifty years ago, and where it has had a hard struggle for due recognition, the Swedish Manual Treatment has during the last few years become better known owing to the benefit derived from it in a multitude of apparently hopeless cases.

The human body is a complicated organism, in which it is necessary that the various members should co-operate with and assist one another, in order to obtain the perfect harmony which we recognise as **HEALTH**.

The success of the Swedish Manual Treatment is principally due to the fact that it is based upon sound anatomical and physiological principles, and that it acts directly upon those parts of the human system which most require assistance, without causing any harm to other parts of the body.

It is well known that exercise of one kind or another is necessary for health, and the amount of exercise which a person is able to take with pleasure is generally

a pretty good measure of his state of health.

If we observe a young and healthy child, we find that it is in constant activity. When it becomes quiet and listless, and ceases to enjoy romping about, we fear that it is not well. The same applies also to adults, though not to the same extent.

When a person is ill, and his vitality is so lowered that it cannot recuperate without assistance, specially adapted exercises are required to help Nature in her work. Just as ordinary food is necessary in good health and a special diet for special complaints, so for a person in a normal state of health ordinary exercise is sufficient, but specially and systematically arranged exercises (or movements) are required by invalids to suit their various complaints.

It would obviously be impracticable in so short a treatise as this to enter into a detailed description of the hundreds of various movements employed in this system,

especially as they must be seen and tried to be understood, but it will suffice to say that they all have well-marked and characteristic effects.

These movements are 'active' or 'passive'; active, those which are performed by the patient alone, or with the help of the operator; passive, those performed by the operator, while the patient is in such a posture as to derive most benefit from them.

The treatment being called 'MANUAL' is often confounded with ordinary 'MASSAGE,' but in reality there is a very great and important difference between the two systems. Massage represents the more crude and undeveloped part of manual treatment, and is generally performed by persons who have little or no knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the body. The Swedish Manual Treatment, on the other hand, has been developed by duly qualified men of high scientific knowledge, is a distinct and complete *system* in itself, and can claim to

be one of the most successful modes of treatment of modern times.

Hence it can easily be understood that, though an uneducated person in a short time can learn to give Massage, skill and knowledge, only to be attained by years of medical study and long practice, are required by the successful operator of the Swedish Manual Treatment.

It is perhaps due to this mistake that people are inclined to ridicule the idea of treating serious illnesses with nothing but dieting and manual treatment, and from the point of view of the general public it must be admitted that there is a certain amount of justification for their attitude in this matter.

Very little has been published about this mode of treatment, and I fully recognise how difficult it is to believe that a purely manual treatment without the use of drugs can be successfully employed in curing those illnesses which one is accustomed to see treated by drugs only. Experience,

however, has proved that it is possible to produce chemical changes by the mechanical stimulation of various organs. The food we take has to undergo certain chemical changes before it can be assimilated and become useful for the body, but if, by reason of the inactivity of some of the organs of the body which produce these changes, the process is incomplete, the very food upon which life depends may become not only useless but even positively harmful. These faulty processes can by mechanical means be greatly remedied, as they are generally due to a sedentary life: and it may be observed that diseases of this nature are most common after the middle period in life, when sports and outdoor games and exercises, to which the English nation undoubtedly owes much of its greatness, have proved too severe, or for other reasons have become discontinued.

Unfortunately, drugs that are useful in some ways are undoubtedly harmful in others, and that is the reason why the

administration of drugs in such a number of illnesses is now superseded by other methods of treatment. Some patients, however, think themselves neglected if they are not well drugged, hence the necessity of prescribing bread-pills and coloured water —a sort of ‘Faith-cure’ which is more frequently employed than many people think.

But to return to the subject.

Of all the movements employed in the Swedish Manual Treatment, perhaps the most characteristic and important, and the one which is a speciality of the School of Manual Treatment to which the writer belongs, is ‘vibration.’

Vibrations are partly direct nerve-vibrations and partly general.

Nerve-vibrations are of several kinds, and can be made most efficacious by a practised operator. In their nature they are sometimes soothing, as those employed in neuralgia, insomnia, and when the nerves are hyperæsthetic, and at other times stimu-

lating, as those applied in cases of nerve degeneration, or when the nervous system is in an exhausted condition.

It is practically impossible to describe satisfactorily these vibrations, but they are of the utmost importance. If, by way of illustration, we regard the nerves as the wires of a telegraphic system conveying impressions and impulses between the central nervous system and the various parts of the body, we can readily understand that by directly affecting the nerves we can most powerfully assist Nature in her healing processes. By this nerve treatment we can cure not only disorders of the nervous system itself, but also diseases of other organs of the body due to deficient nerve impulses. From experimental physiology we have learnt the effect produced upon various organs by the stimulation of different nerves, and by utilizing the knowledge thus obtained we are able to produce remarkable results.

Vibrations can be applied not only to

nerves but also to large surfaces of the body.

The methods of their production are, however, somewhat different.

Whilst nerve vibrations are produced by vibrating with the tips of the fingers, the vibrating waves following the course of the nerve, general vibrations are usually brought about by vibrating with the whole hand upon the place to be acted on, and in this case the vibrations penetrate in the direction of the applied force. This penetrating power is easily demonstrated in the following way :

Suppose a patient to be reclining on a sofa, and vibrations to be made on his chest. If you place your hand under his back, you will distinctly perceive that the vibrations have passed right through his body. This power is of very great importance in the treatment of disease. For instance, in a case of pulmonary disorder, where a secretion of tough mucus is distressing the patient from his inability to get rid of it,

by means of the treatment the mucus is set into a slight vibrating movement and loosened, and the patient is enabled to expectorate with comparative ease. When he is in a very weak state, and his strength has to be economized to the utmost to enable him to outlast the illness and not die from exhaustion or suffocation, it is obvious that this assistance must be of the greatest importance. Many cases, which now prove fatal, could undoubtedly be saved if this simple remedy were used in time.

But in cases of this kind we do not rely solely on vibrations, as we have at our disposal a number of other passive respiratory movements which are of great value.

Some of them are in general use in cases of drowning, and in other cases where artificial respiration is required.

In the treatment of diseases of the heart, vibrations also play a most important part. Not only do they restore the equilibrium of the heart-beat, by stimulating both the cardiac inhibitory (vagus) and the cardiac

augmentatory (sympathetic) nerves, but they strengthen the heart itself; moreover, they assist in removing flatulence and the consequent distension of the stomach, which often alone is sufficient to cause distressing functional disorder of the heart.

In disorders of the digestive system, also, vibrations have a most beneficial effect, particularly in cases of catarrh, or inflammation, when other movements would be contra-indicated. They are also of great value in assisting the passage of stone from the kidney or the gall-bladder. Dr. George Harley advocates digital manipulation in the extrusion of gall-stones. The danger of injuring the duct by too forcible manipulation is greatly overcome by the employment of vibrations, which relieve the pain and spasmodic contraction of the duct.

As another instance of the benefit of vibrations may be mentioned cases of acute pain in any part of the body, and trouble in very delicate organs, such as the eyes. It is obvious that in these cases the greatest

delicacy must be employed in the production of the vibrations, but the relief afforded amply repays the extreme care required.

Supposing you have a very tender place, where even the slightest touch causes excruciating pain, it is possible, by extremely light vibrations, gradually to remove the tenderness, so that you will find, to your great relief, and perhaps surprise, that the previously tender place feels quite comfortable.

It is needless to say that this is most tiring work for the operator, and that it requires a naturally good 'hand' and long practice to be performed satisfactorily.

Sometimes, after only a few treatments, the pain is entirely removed, but more often, owing to the illness being of a long standing, it requires a considerably longer time to effect a cure. Amongst such cases may be mentioned all kinds of neuralgia, sciatica, lumbago, etc., sprains and contusions, abscesses, ulcerations, and local inflammations. Also in certain diseases of the joints, when passive flexions and ex-

tensions would be too painful, vibrations are largely used to overcome the excessive sensitiveness, and to disperse the congestion of the parts.

I have tried to explain at some length the action and use of vibrations, because they are so important a factor in our treatment ; but, as I said before, it is practically impossible to give a satisfactory description of them, as they must be tried and felt to be understood, and I can in one treatment demonstrate more about this system than by pages of written description.

The other movements which are employed in this system, viz., the more ordinary medico-gymnastic exercises, do not require so much explanation, as they are generally better known, but everybody does not perhaps realize what very great effect they can have on the whole body when they are scientifically applied.

The following quotations, which are borrowed from Frederick Treves's excellent article on 'Physical Education' (in Quain's

‘Dictionary of Medicine,’ edition 1894, vol. ii., page 420), ought to carry weight as to the importance of physical exercise for maintaining health :

‘Save by exercise, there is no means of developing any portion of the organism, even provided that the supply of food and air be sufficient.

‘Exercise means growth, functional vigour, and the maintenance of a high standard of organic life. Undue rest is followed by feebleness and decay.

‘Exercise increases the size of the muscle, the stoutness of its tendon, and the power it can command.

‘Muscles act upon articulations. The duly exercised joint has a good covering of cartilage, powerful ligaments, and well-developed bony parts. Exercise, moreover, influences the size of the bones upon which the muscles act, and renders them stronger and denser.

‘Exercise induces a more vigorous respira-

tion, and under the increased breathing efforts the lung capacity and the size of the thorax are augmented. It accelerates also the blood circulation, and the effect of an increased blood-supply upon the size and condition of the tissues is well known.

‘In the matter of personal comfort no greater sense of pure pleasure can arise than from perfect health, *and such health cannot be attained without a full exercise of the manifold energies of the body.*

‘Moderate, regular, and systematic exercise, by stimulating the circulation of the body, improves also the circulation of the brain, and is, therefore, an aid to cerebral movements.

‘By improving the health and physical strength it increases the capability of the individual for mental work, and for the physical strain consequent upon mental concentration.

‘It offers, too, an admirable change of employment, and in this way becomes a valuable means of rest.’

‘Prescribe fencing, gymnastics with apparatus, and lessons in a riding-school,’ writes Dr. Lagrange, ‘to all those idle persons whose brain languishes for want of work.

‘The exercises should be adapted to meet the needs of each individual case.

‘They should be carefully devised, systematically arranged, and suitably graduated.’

From the above quotations it is evident that people who have to lead a sedentary and nerve-straining life are much more liable to illness, and have less vitality to recuperate from it, than those who lead a more active and natural life.

The following classification might explain more fully the effect of the active and passive movements used in this treatment on the different organs of the body :

Movements stimulate the *circulation* and quicken the pulse, and so assist one of the most important organs of our body—the heart—in performing its heavy task. From

the heart the blood is driven into the arteries, from the arteries into the capillaries, and from the capillaries into the veins, and thus back again to the heart to be sent through the lungs to be aërated, before it is again forced into the arteries. The greatest amount of the heart's energy is expended in the passage of the blood through the microscopic capillaries, and it is therefore of importance to be able to assist the return of the blood through the veins, and thus prevent a block at the out-flow of the capillaries.

This result is obtained by muscular contractions and relaxations, and by respiratory movements, as I will try to explain: when a muscle contracts, it exerts pressure on the bloodvessels imbedded in it. This pressure has not so great an effect on the arteries, which have thick walls, as on the veins, whose walls are thinner. By each contraction, pressure being brought to bear on the veins, the blood is forced out of them. But as the veins are supplied with valves, the

blood is prevented from returning towards the capillaries, and is driven onward towards the heart. At each relaxation of the muscle a fresh amount of blood rushes in, which is forced onwards at each subsequent contraction.

This 'pumping' action is somewhat similar to that produced by respiratory movements. At each inspiration a certain amount of air rushes into the lungs to equalize the atmospheric pressure inside and outside the thorax (chest). But, by reason of the elasticity of the lungs, which to a certain extent counteracts the pressure of the air in them, the heart and the great vessels situated between the lungs and the thoracic wall are subjected to less atmospheric pressure than the extra-thoracic vessels. Again, owing to the thickness of their walls, and to the greater blood-pressure of the arterial blood, this difference of atmospheric pressure within and without the thorax does not affect the left ventricle and the aorta so much as it does the venæ

cavæ and the right auricle, the walls of which are thinner. Thus it is that the intra-thoracic negative pressure (suction) principally acts in assisting the return of the venous blood towards the heart.

That which has been said about the circulation of the blood applies also to the lymphatic circulation, and it will therefore be unnecessary to enter into any description of the action of movements in assisting this circulation, though, as the lymph is about 30 per cent. of the whole body-weight, it is obviously a factor that has to be taken into consideration.

In cases of local inflammation or congestion we have, however, special movements to relieve the parts affected. There are also certain movements designed to stimulate the cutaneous circulation, which in special cases is of great importance, as, for example, in pulmonary congestion, congestion of the spinal cord, etc. By means of this treatment, therefore, we can not only stimulate the general circulation and give valuable

assistance to a weak heart, but also draw the blood away from congested parts, and thus equalize the blood-flow.

Respiration and circulation go hand-in-hand, and an increased circulation makes it necessary for more air to be taken into the lungs. All movements induce a more rapid inspiration, but the Swedish Manual Treatment comprises only those 'respiratory' movements which can be performed without undue exertion, and whose aim is to increase the strength and capacity of the respiratory organs, and thus enable them to fulfil their functions properly. By their increased activity more oxygen is taken into the lungs, where it is exchanged for a corresponding (or approximately so) amount of carbonic acid gas. The latter, which is one of the refuse products of the combustion constantly going on in the tissues of the body, becomes a poison if not properly eliminated. The stronger the lungs are, the less liable are they to become affected by any pulmonary disorder, and a strong and

well-developed chest usually indicates and promotes good general health. For young people with weak and narrow chests, and with hereditary tendency to consumption, that dread disease which, unfortunately, is so common in this country, it is of particular importance to employ respiratory exercises, for by thus strengthening themselves they will be better able to conquer their natural foe, who is only waiting for a favourable opportunity to attack and destroy them.

By means of certain movements all the various organs, whose united duty it is to *digest* and assimilate the food, are stimulated to greater functional activity ; the abdominal muscles become stronger, the mesenteric circulation is accelerated, and the increased blood-supply induces greater activity of the glands lining the intestines ; the liver and pancreas are encouraged to fulfil their most important functions more vigorously, peristalsis becomes stronger ; and the kidneys and skin perform their *excretory* duties more thoroughly. As a

result of all this increased activity, the digestion and assimilation of the food become more complete, nourishment is carried more quickly to the various parts of the body, effete matter is more efficiently removed, and the pleasant sensation of feeling well is experienced.

The effect of exercise upon the *muscular system* is too well known to require comment ; but just as the muscles grow stronger and more healthy by the increased blood-supply, so also does the *nervous system* regain strength and vitality. The tone of the nerves improves, the impulses to and from the central nervous system are quickened, your energy is increased, you feel more confidence in yourself, and display more determination and promptitude in your actions ; you are more alert, and feel better able to fight and overcome all the difficulties in life. But everybody has experienced the delightful and enlivening effect exercise has upon the spirits.

As we have seen, the human body is

indeed a wonderful mechanism, where all the different parts have their special work to perform, and are dependent upon one another for the undisturbed action of the whole system. It is a sort of automatic machine, regulated by the nerves. The digestive organs prepare the food, the blood carries nourishment to the tissues, and removes from them the waste products. The excretory organs purify the blood, and the lungs supply the necessary amount of oxygen. But there is one duty which we, in this civilized age, are apt to overlook and forget, and that is the duty of the body as a *whole* to do muscular work in order to supply the food (and air) necessary for feeding this mechanism.

In olden times people were so much stronger and healthier because their conditions forced on them a life of constant activity in the open air in order to obtain their food. Our conditions of life are different, and we must therefore take exercise in a different form.

In most illnesses a certain amount of pain is experienced. That is Nature's way of telling us about the disorder. It is our duty to study Nature's demands, follow her guidance, and assist her as she herself indicates—not by simply removing the pain, but by curing the disorder which causes it. If it were not for the pain and discomfort felt in illness, we should not be aware of anything wrong, and should consequently not be able to give the necessary assistance to Nature in her healing process, for let us remember, it is Nature, and Nature alone, that cures ; and the best physicians are those who rightly understand and follow the guidance of Nature.

Illness is a disturbance of the harmony of the organs of the body, or of the functional activity of certain parts, when it is not actually due to any organic defect. The Swedish Manual Treatment restores the lost harmony, assists *directly* the weakened organs to fulfil their functions, and thus

gives Nature the most advantageous opportunity to overcome the illness. It can be adapted to suit the most delicate cases, and it is quite a misapprehension to believe that it tires the patients ; on the contrary, it economizes their strength, prevents complications, and enables them to throw off the illness much more rapidly. Therefore it is not too much to claim that by a systematically and properly applied treatment nearly every disease can be, if not cured, at least alleviated.

If I have succeeded in making this clearly understood, it will not be necessary to enumerate a long list of illnesses for which this treatment is suitable ; but it will suffice to say that numerous diseases, both acute and chronic, have been treated with great success ; and it is my firm conviction, founded on long experience, that the Swedish Manual Treatment, in the hands of scientific and conscientious practitioners, will not belie our faith in it, but will become still more

developed, and will be recognised as one of the most rational and successful modes of treatment of modern times.

In conclusion, attention may be called to the marked revolution which is going on in the medical world. We are no longer content to employ those subtle forces which are doing their work unseen in our bodies, we want some more apparent and visible remedies, the action of which we can understand and explain. Surgery has made wonderful progress, and is now employed in many new cases. Heart disease is admittedly treated with success by the so-called Nauheim Treatment, part of which consists of certain Swedish movements. Manipulations and passive movements have only lately been taken up as a successful treatment of recent fractures and dislocations —absolutely the reverse to the old mode of treatment. The Weir-Mitchell Treatment is extensively used for neurasthenia and similar complaints, and curvature of the spine is cured by movements; in fact, the

present day is ripe for a rational manual and medico-gymnastic treatment. The misfortune is that it is not sufficiently known to be employed at an early stage of illness, when its success would naturally be much more ensured.

THE END.

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